AZAMARU 4 TAMAKI IPPEI MANGA

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AZAMARU

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Volume 04 Chapter 1

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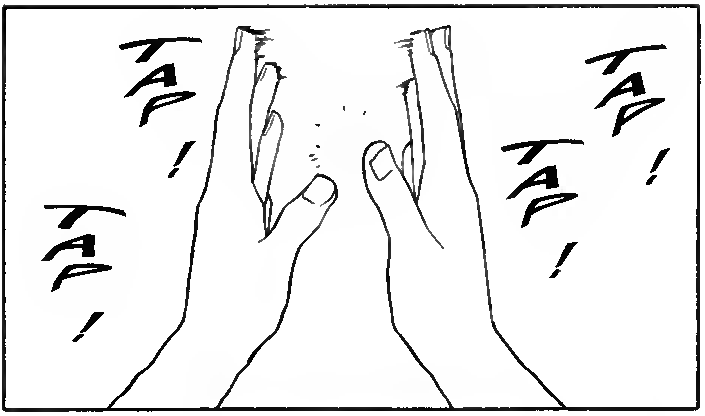
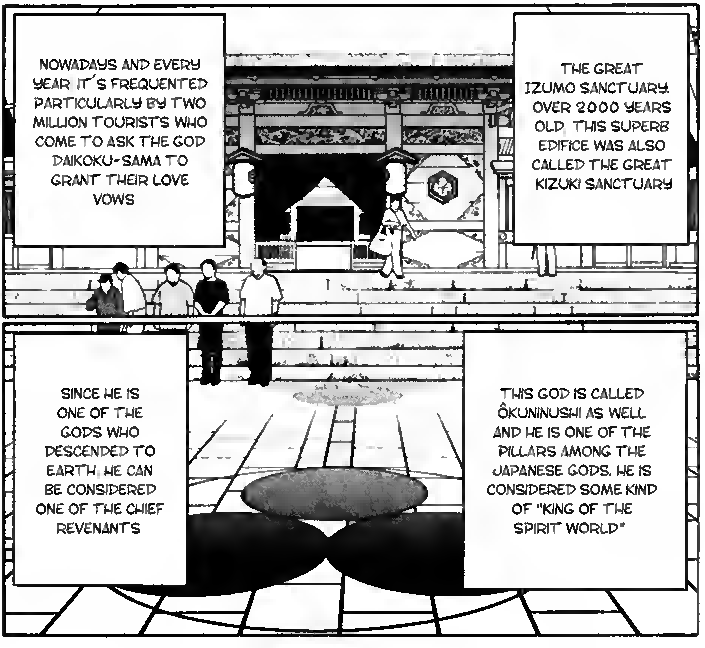

TAP !
TAP !
TAP !
TAP !


NOWADAYS AND EVERY YEAR IT'S FREQUENTED PARTICULARLY BY TWO MILLION TOURIST'S WHO COME TO ASK THE GOD DAIKOKU-SAMA TO GRANT THEIR LOVE VOWS
THE GREAT IZUMO SANCTUARY OVER 2000 YEARS OLD. THIS SUPERB EDIFICE WAS ALSO CALLED THE GREAT KIZUKI SANCTUARY
SINCE HE IS ONE OF THE GODS WHO DESCENDED TO EARTH, HE CAN BE CONSIDERED ONE OF THE CHIEF REVENANT'S
THIS GOD IS CALLED ÔKUNINUSHI AS WELL AND HE IS ONE OF THE PILLARS AMONG THE JAPANESE GODS. HE IS CONSIDERED SOME KIND OF "KING OF THE SPIRIT WORLD"

AZAMARU 4

IPPEI TAMAKI

Chapter 20: Prisonners p.5

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Chapter 23: The Shogun´s Solitude p.108

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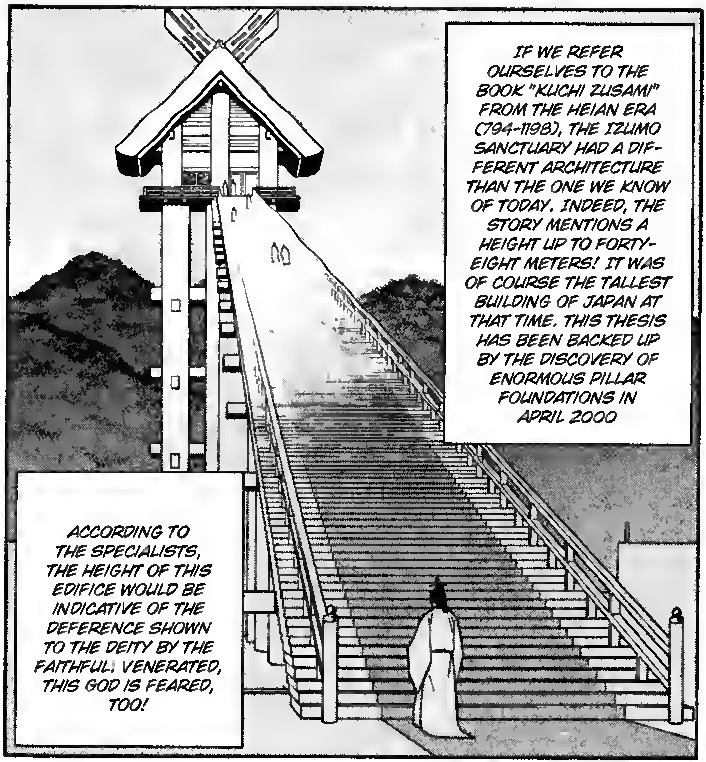
Chapter 25: Going to meet Azamaru p.175

Summary of the previous volumes:

In 1191, three warriors departed on Japan's roads to avenge their fallen clans. These fellows were Akubé, Tomoé, and the ninja Jenaga. On their journey, they crossed paths with numerous masked soldiers who returned from the afterlife. They belonged to the terrifying Mask Clan, allies of the Genji. But those countless revenants will have the upper hand eventually if the three comrades do not try to eliminate the source of the problem: kill the "Living Gods" capable of resurrecting the Dead. But only Akubé's sword Azamaru is able to destroy the soul of these monsters. However, during a battle, Akubé and his friends encounter a human army who manages to capture them...


IF WE REFER OURSELVES TO THE BOOK "KUCHI ZUSAMI" FROM THE HEIAN ERA (794-1198), THE IZUMO SANCTUARY HAD A DIFFERENT ARCHITECTURE THAN THE ONE WE KNOW OF TODAY. INDEED, THE STORY MENTIONS A HEIGHT UP TO FORTY-EIGHT METERS! IT WAS OF COURSE THE TALLEST BUILDING OF JAPAN AT THAT TIME. THIS THESIS HAS BEEN BACKED UP BY THE DISCOVERY OF ENORMOUS PILLAR FOUNDATIONS IN APRIL 2000
ACCORDING TO THE SPECIALISTS, THE HEIGHT OF THIS EDIFICE WOULD BE INDICATIVE OF THE DEFERENCE SHOWN TO THE DEITY BY THE FAITHFUL. VENERATED, THIS GOD IS FEARED, TOO!

THE NUMBER FOUR IN JAPANESE IS PRONOUNCED "SHI", EXACTLY THE SAME WAY AS THE WORD "DEATH". PEOPLE THEREFORE CLAPPED FOUR TIMES IN ORDER NOT TO BRING THE GOD BACK FROM THE LAND OF THE DEAD...
MOREOVER, EVEN THOUGH A PRAYER ENDS BY CLAPPING TWO TIMES YOUR HANDS IN ALL THE SHINTŌ SANCTUARIES OF JAPAN, A PRAYER IN THE IZUMO SANCTUARY REQUIRES FOUR CLAPS...

Chapter 20: Prisoners

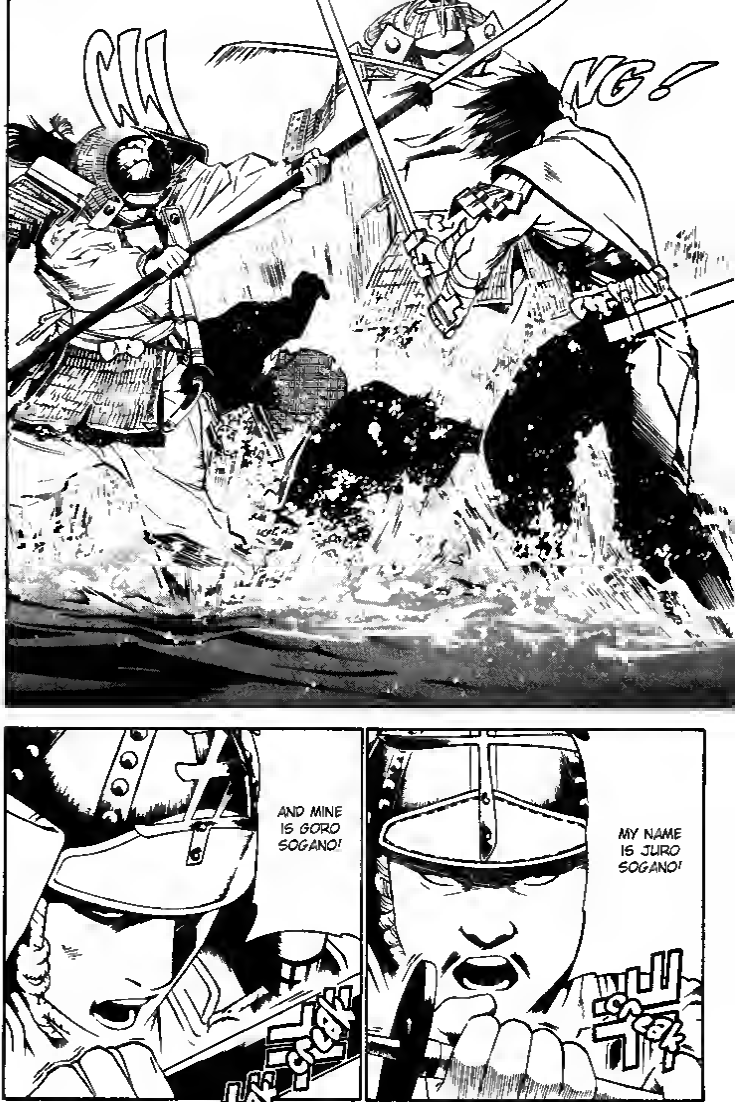
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
STOMP
UNBE-
LIEVA-
BLE...
THESE
SOLDIERS
GIVEN
SUPERHUMAN
STRENGTH
JUST
CRUSHED
THIS ARMY
OF THE
MASKS!

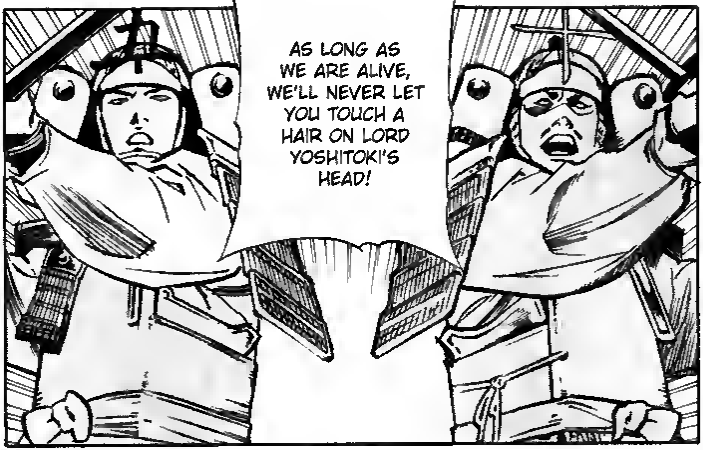
ザザア
shaashaaa
ひひひひん
……
……

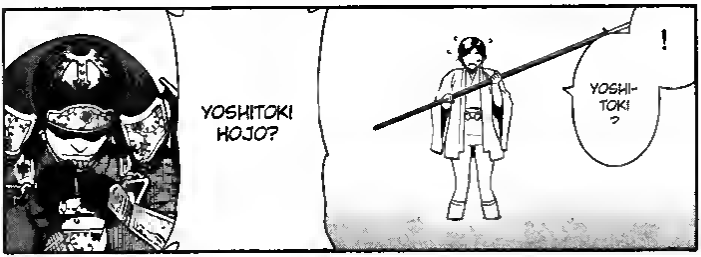
OH! IT'S YOU, KAGE-KIYO?
I HAD INDEED HEARD YOU WERE IN THE AREA BUT ...
ZAAAM

WHACK
HUUUU!
SLASH!
SLOSH
SON OF...
HMM?
KATAAN!

I JUST SAVED YOUR LIFE!
I NEVER ASKED FOR YOUR OPINION!
I FORBID YOU TO CALL ME KAGEKIYO!
FILTHY GENJI!


CLI
NG!
AND MINE IS GORO SOGANO!
MY NAME IS JURO SOGANO!

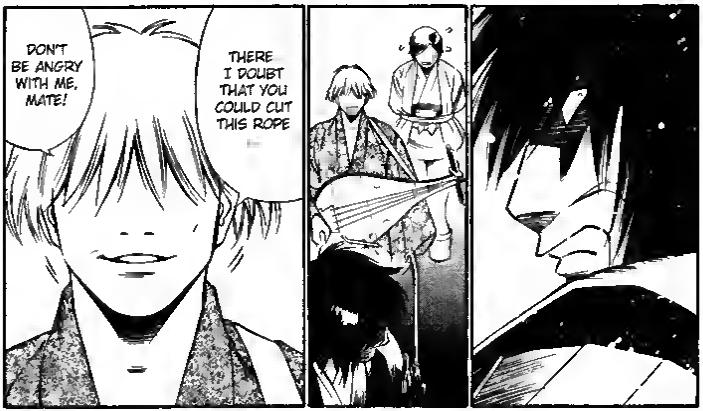

AS LONG AS WE ARE ALIVE, WE'LL NEVER LET YOU TOUCH A HAIR ON LORD YOSHITOKI'S HEAD!


YOSHITOKI HOJO?
YOSHI-TOKI ?
!

A FEW YEARS LATER, DURING THE ERA OF THE KAMAKURA GOVERNMENT, HE WAS TO SUCCEED HIS FATHER AS REGENT AND THUS BECAME...
ELDEST SON OF TOKIMASA HOJO, A VERY INFLUENTIAL WARRIOR WHO WAS APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF KYOTO BY YORITOMO IN 1185
YOSHITOKI HOJO
VLASH !

...ONE OF THIS COUNTRY'S MOST POWERFUL MAN...
WHAT STRENGTH!
CLING!
SHLING!
WH
WA
WAIT!
WHAT?
BLAST!
AARGH!
ERD
OOOF!
YES, BUT ERR
I WON'T WAIT!
CREAK

SLASH!!
!
ZAAAAA
ニヤッ


DON'T BE ANGRY WITH ME, MATE!
THERE I DOUBT THAT YOU COULD CUT THIS ROPE

HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED IT YET?!
IENAGA!
YOU WERE SENT BY THE GENJI?!
AND TO THINK WE WERE SEARCHING FOR IT THE WHOLE TIME UNDER WATER! NOW I'M HOLDING IT IN MY HANDS
HMMM, SO THIS IS THE FAMOUS DIVINE SWORD? THE KUSANAGI SWORD?
SPLOTCH

THE SWORD WHICH CAN ONLY BE USED BY THE ONES CHOSEN BY THE GODS ...
IT WOULD BE PERFECT FOR THE EMPEROR'S ENTHRONE-MENT.
CLING!
I'M ALL EXCITED ABOUT IT!
WHAT A PITY THAT IT BELONGS TO A SUR-VIVOR OF THE HEIJI CLAN...
IT WOULD BE SO MUCH MORE BEFITTING TO ME!
KAGE-KIYO ...
I WONDER WHAT MATERIAL IT'S MADE OF...
IT'S REALLY LIGHT!
THIS SWORD ...

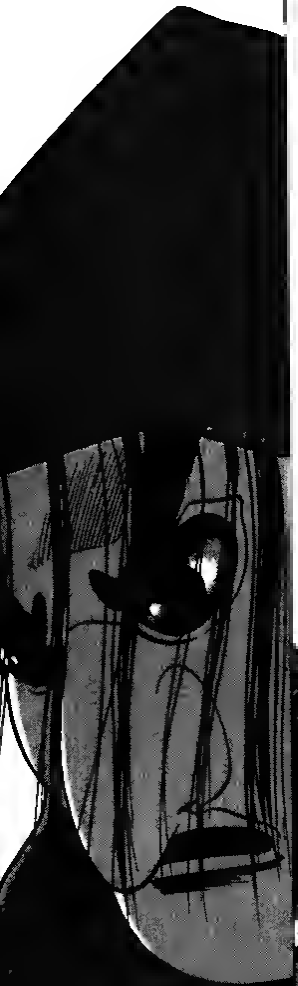
WHAT?
I'M GIVING IT BACK TO YOU!
SLASH!
.....
YEAH
IT'S BEST TO PUT THIS THING AWAY IN A VERY SOLID BOX
THIS SWORD WILL TAKE POSSESSION OF THE SOUL OF ITS USER IN ORDER TO RETURN TO AKUBE
THIS WEAPON SHOULDN'T BE LEFT IN THE CARE OF JUST ANYBODY.

AHAHAHA! IN SHORT, NINJA, YOU ARE TELLING ME I WASN'T CHOSEN BY THE GODS? THAT'S IT?
BAH. I REALLY DON'T CARE. BESIDES, I'M NOT HERE FOR THIS WEAPON
ON THE OTHER HAND, SOMEONE IS GOING TO BE DELIGHTED
IT'S A BIT FAR BUT...
I'LL HAVE TO MAKE YOU WALK UP TO HIM

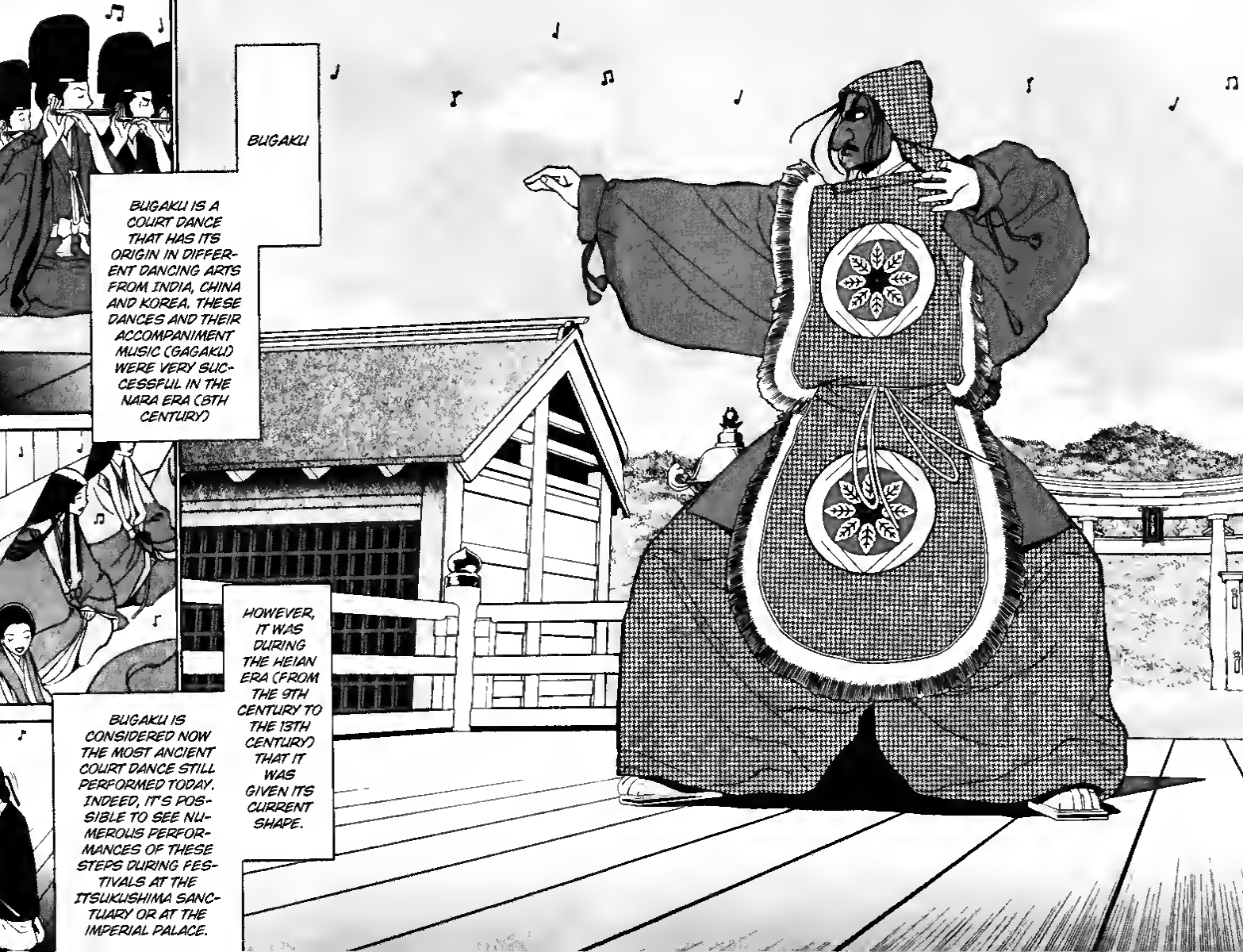
AFTER THE HEIJI'S EXTERMINATION, PEOPLE SAY THAT EVEN THE GENJI WERE SEDUCED BY THE PROFOUND RELIGIOUS ATMOSPHERE OF THAT PLACE. THEY SETTLED THERE.

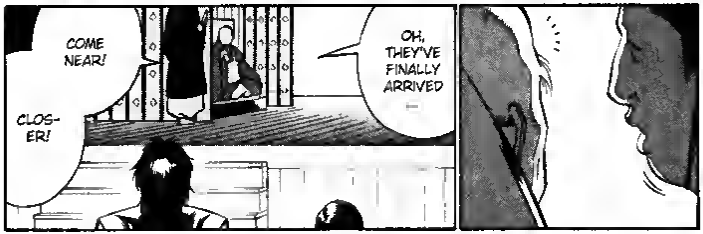
BUT ONLY AFTERWARDS, DURING SHOGUN TAIRA NO KINOMORI'S LIFETIME (1118-1181), DID IT KNOW ITS GREATEST PROSPERITY AND BECOME THE HEIJI CLAN'S PROPERTY. STILL TODAY, THE STYLE OF THOSE BUILDINGS IS FAITHFULLY PRESERVED AND THIS WHOLE ARCHITECTURE REPRESENTS A PRECIOUS INHERITANCE WHICH CONVEYS THE ATMOSPHERE OF THIS ERA.

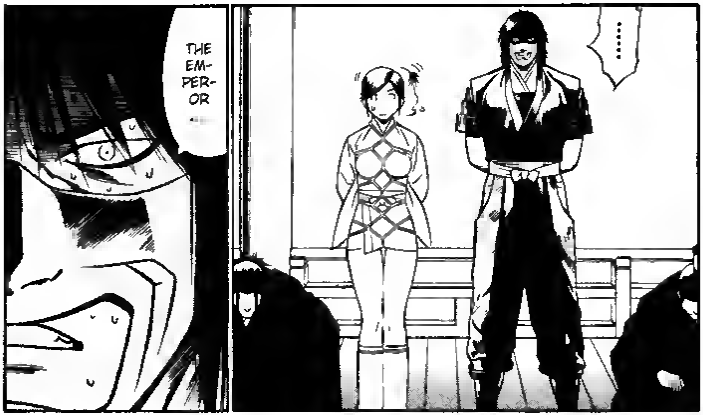
THE ITSUKUSHIMA SANCTUARY (OR "MIYAJIMA SANCTUARY") WHICH IS TRADITIONALLY PART OF THE "THREE MOST BEAUTIFUL SITES OF JAPAN", IS SAID TO HAVE BEEN BUILT DURING THE ASUKA PERIOD IN 593, THE YEAR OF EMPRESS SUIKO'S ENTHRONEMENT.



IT'S VERY ORIGINAL ARCHITECTURE GIVES VISITORS THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SANCTUARY IS FLOATING ON WATER DURING THE HIGH TIDE. ITS HIGH GATE "TORII" TOO IS ALWAYS VISIBLE AND HAS BEEN CONTRIBUTING FOR OVER 800 YEARS IN KEEPING THE MAGICAL ATMOSPHERE OF THAT PLACE.


BUGAKU
BUGAKU IS A COURT DANCE THAT HAS ITS ORIGIN IN DIFFERENT DANCING ARTS FROM INDIA, CHINA AND KOREA. THESE DANCES AND THEIR ACCOMPANIMENT MUSIC (GAGAKU) WERE VERY SUCCESSFUL IN THE NARA ERA (8TH CENTURY)
HOWEVER, IT WAS DURING THE HEIAN ERA (FROM THE 9TH CENTURY TO THE 13TH CENTURY) THAT IT WAS GIVEN ITS CURRENT SHAPE.
BUGAKU IS CONSIDERED NOW THE MOST ANCIENT COURT DANCE STILL PERFORMED TODAY. INDEED, IT'S POSSIBLE TO SEE NUMEROUS PERFORMANCES OF THESE STEPS DURING FESTIVALS AT THE ITSUKUSHIMA SANCTUARY OR AT THE IMPERIAL PALACE.


COME NEAR!
CLOS-ER!
OH, THEY'VE FINALLY ARRIVED


THE EM-PER-OR
.....

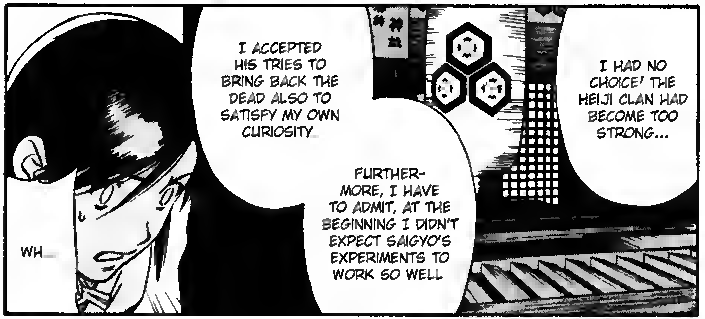
THE SOVEREIGN GO-SHIRAKAWA!!
THE RETIRED EMPEROR GO-
HE WAS BORN IN 1127 AND DIED IN 1192. HE WAS APPOINTED WITH SOVEREIGN OF THE EMPERIAL BLOODLINE
AND 1158. SO HIS REIGN
HIM, WHO CONTROLLED THE COUNTRY THROUGH HIS GIGANTIC POLITICAL INFLUENCE.
ULTIMATE RELIGIOUS SYMBOL OF THE WHOLE COUNTRY. HE
RESPECTED AND THE TWO ENEMY CLANS, HEISI AND GENJI,
OBEY HIM. EVEN YORITOMO SPOKE OF HIM IN THESE TERMS: "THE
GOD OF JAPAN"
UNFORTUNATELY, DURING THE ADVENT OF THE MINAMOTO, HE WAS OVERTHROWN AND KEPT LOCKED UP. HIS REIGN CAME TO AN END.

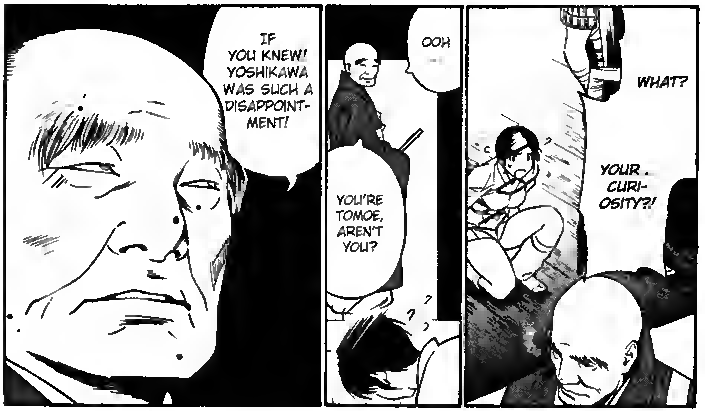
HEY! PROSTATE YOURSELF!
OH! WH...
BAH. WHAT DOES IT MATTER!
IF YOU DON'T COME TO ME, THEN I'LL COME TO YOU...
GRRR
I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD SEE YOU ALIVE AGAIN AND UNDER ANOTHER IDENTITY.
I REMEMBER HAVING MET YOU SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE..
IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME, KAGEKIYO...

NINJA!
ERR, YOU THERE!
ERR WHAT'S YOUR NAME AGAIN
YOU HAVE MY THANKS YOU MAY LEAVE...
OH OH!
I SEE.
.....
PFFF!
HMMM
WHAT IS IT?
THAT'S IT! I'M START-ING TO UNDER-STAND!
HEHE!
HA HA HA!
EH!
.....
I SHOULD'VE NOTICED IT AS SOON AS I KNEW YOU USED THE DIVINE OBJECTS

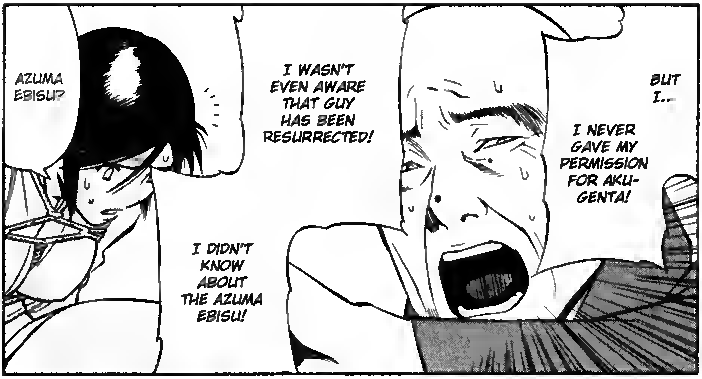
IT'S YOU WHO GAVE THE ORDER TO MONK SAIGYO TO BRING AKUGENTA BACK FROM THE DEAD!
SO YOU WERE THE ONE!

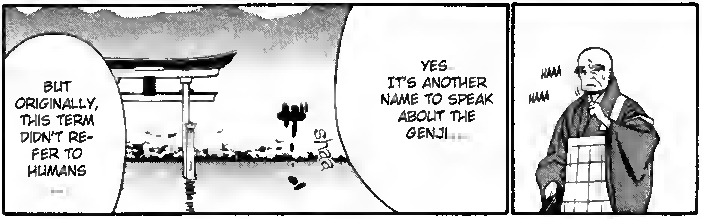
AND BESIDES, I'M THE SPIRITUAL LEADER!
I DO WHAT I WANT, WHATEVER YOU MAY THINK OF IT...
SCHEIC
KIYOMORI IS THE CULPRIT...
HMM...
.....

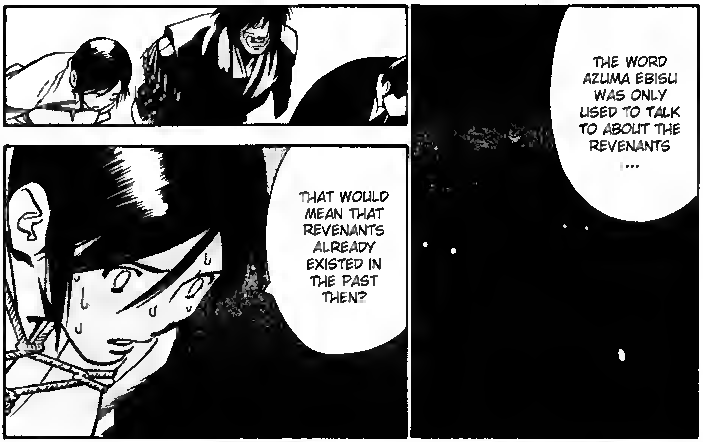

I ACCEPTED HIS TRIES TO BRING BACK THE DEAD ALSO TO SATISFY MY OWN CURIOSITY...
FURTHER-MORE, I HAVE TO ADMIT, AT THE BEGINNING I DIDN'T EXPECT SAIGYO'S EXPERIMENTS TO WORK SO WELL
I HAD NO CHOICE! THE HEIJI CLAN HAD BECOME TOO STRONG...
WH...

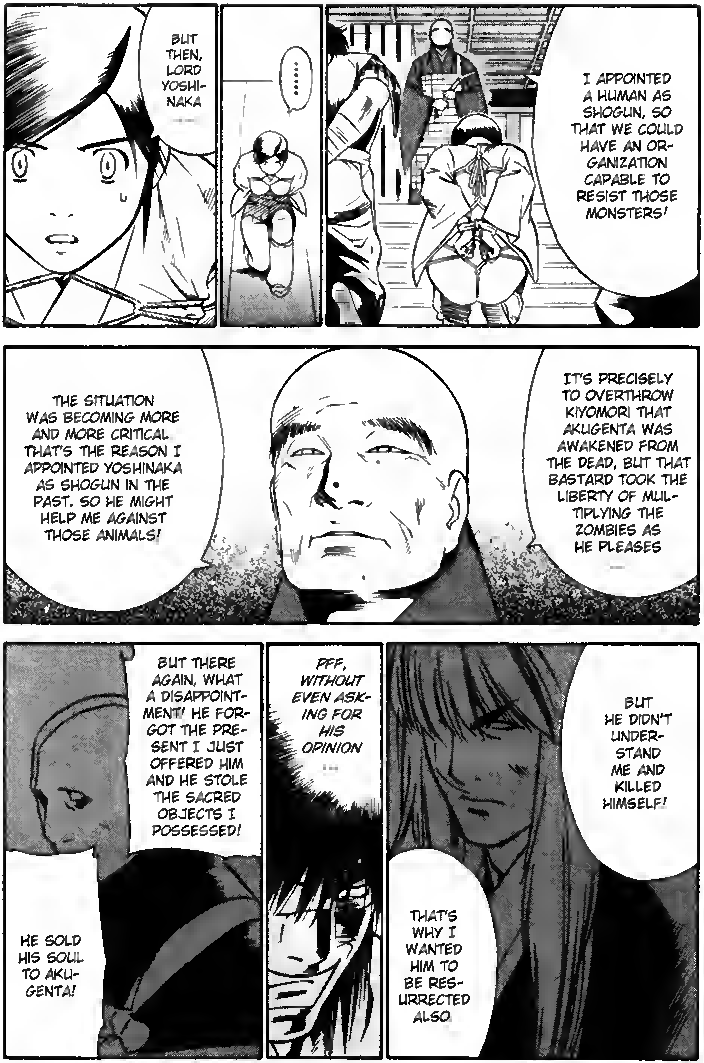

IF YOU KNEW! YOSHIKAWA WAS SUCH A DISAPPOINT-MENT!
OOH...
YOU'RE TOMOE, AREN'T YOU?
WHAT?
YOUR... CURI-OSITY?!

LEAD
SLA
SH!
WHAA
...
PUOC


AZUMA EBISU?
I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT THE AZUMA EBISU!
I WASN'T EVEN AWARE THAT GUY HAS BEEN RESURRECTED!
I NEVER GAVE MY PERMISSION FOR AKU-GENTA!
BUT I...


BUT ORIGINALLY, THIS TERM DIDN'T RE-FER TO HUMANS...
YES... IT'S ANOTHER NAME TO SPEAK ABOUT THE GENJI...
HMM HMM

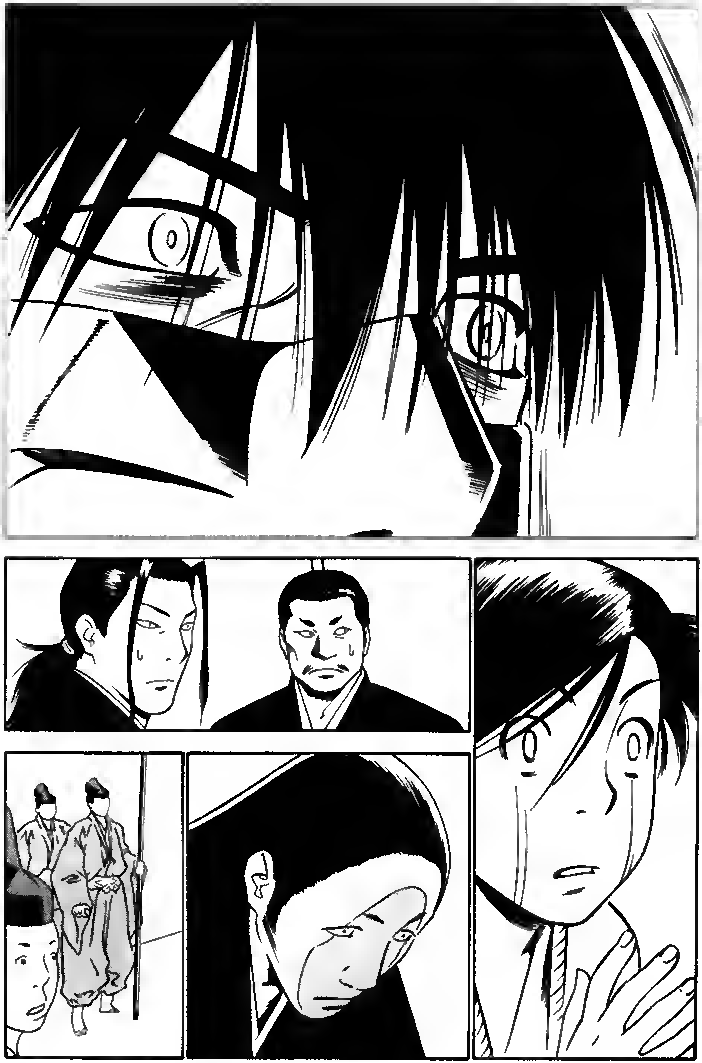

THAT WOULD MEAN THAT REVENANTS ALREADY EXISTED IN THE PAST THEN?
THE WORD AZUMA EBISU WAS ONLY USED TO TALK TO ABOUT THE REVENANTS ...


BUT, THEN, LORD YOSHINAKA
.....
I APPOINTED A HUMAN AS SHOGUN, SO THAT WE COULD HAVE AN ORGANIZATION CAPABLE TO RESIST THOSE MONSTERS!
THE SITUATION WAS BECOMING MORE AND MORE CRITICAL THAT'S THE REASON I APPOINTED YOSHINAKA AS SHOGUN IN THE PAST. SO HE MIGHT HELP ME AGAINST THOSE ANIMALS!
IT'S PRECISELY TO OVERTHROW KIYOMORI THAT AKUGENTA WAS AWAKENED FROM THE DEAD, BUT THAT BASTARD TOOK THE LIBERTY OF MULTIPLYING THE ZOMBIES AS HE PLEASES
BUT THERE AGAIN, WHAT A DISAPPOINTMENT! HE FORGOT THE PRESENT I JUST OFFERED HIM AND HE STOLE THE SACRED OBJECTS I POSSESSED!
HE SOLD HIS SOUL TO AKUGENTA!
PFF, WITHOUT EVEN ASKING FOR HIS OPINION
...
BUT HE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND ME AND KILLED HIMSELF!
THAT'S WHY I WANTED HIM TO BE RESURRECTED ALSO

OLD FOGEY!
IF I WERE IN HIS PLACE, I WOULD HAVE DONE THE SAME THING!
SEEMS OBVIOUS...
WHAT A BASTARD! BECAUSE OF SUCH AN OLD, SENILE WRECK...
LORD YOSHINAKA WAS FORCED TO DIE TWICE...
PLIC
FUIP

YOU ARE WEARING THE SACRED SWORD ABLE TO ANNIHILATE THE AZUMA EBISU...
YOU BROUGHT IT TO ME
...I THANK YOU
SHUP!
swish

I NOT ONLY NEED THE SWORD!
I ALSO NEED THE MAN IT CHOSE!
YOU, KAGEKIYO!
I'M TALKING ABOUT YOU!
ZAA
AM!
KAGEKIYO FROM THE TAIRA CLAN!
THEREFORE, I DECIDED TO APPOINT YOU GREAT SHOGUN OF THIS COUNTRY!
11 POINTS



ON OCTOBER 1191, KAGEKIYO OF THE TAIRA CLAN...
...WAS APPOINTED GREAT SHOGUN.